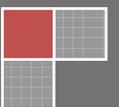


2009

Young People and the One Social Housing System

Section 2: Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme

This is section 2 of the report that focuses on the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme and its place within the OSHS.



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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Communities - Housing and Homelessness Services have an increasing challenge of meeting the needs of low income young people in Queensland who require housing. Young people form the largest cohort of the homeless population, with nearly 34,000 young people between the 12 to 24 years being homeless.¹

Young people are generally defined as being between the ages of 12 to 24 and therefore adolescent development must be considered in responding to their housing needs. This does not imply that the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition is of the opinion that the accommodation and housing responses will be the same for all young people in this age cohort. Consideration should be given to age, support needs and skill levels when developing responses to young people's accommodation and housing needs.

Young people between the ages of 12 – 14 years of age are the responsibility of their parents or child protection if they are unable to live at home. It has been acknowledged in literature that for some young people 15 – 24 years of age require some level of support to assist them in their transition to interdependence. In Queensland one of the programs that have supported young people in their housing has been the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme.

The aim of this paper is to outline the history of the YHTS, the Evaluation of the program and discuss the changes that have evolved since the conception of the YHTS.

Lastly the paper will make a number of recommendations about the role of the Youth Headlease Transfer within the broader continuum of support for young people.

¹ ABS Census 2006.

HISTORY OF THE YOUTH HEADLEASE TRANSFER SCHEME

In March 1992 approval was given from Minister of the Queensland Department Housing Local Government and Planning, (now the Queensland Department of Communities - Housing and Homelessness Services) for the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme (YHTS) to begin operation. This scheme aimed to provide transitional support and housing for young people to independent accommodation. However it was also instigated to increase the capacity of the Departments housing programs to respond to the needs of young people.²

In a headleasing arrangement community youth organisations were allocated properties and were able to be sub-let to young people. Once the young person had the appropriate skill level to manage their own tenancies, the lease was then transferred from the community youth organisation directly to the young person. The youth housing organisation would then be allocated another property that they could sublet.

The scheme allocated properties through a headleasing process from the Queensland Department Housing Local Government and Planning (QDHLG) to community youth organisations, predominately Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) providers, as services had to demonstrate the capacity to provide support to young people.

Services that were eligible under the scheme needed to demonstrate their capacity in a range of areas including administrative capacities, provision of support and tenancy management. This assessment also included how many properties would be allocated to each service.

Services were responsible for the payment of rent to the QDHLG at a set rate depending on the type of housing, maintenance (excluding normal wear and tear), data, and qualitative reports at the point of transfer to public housing property and to participate in any program evaluation processes. If a vacancy occurred in the YHTS property it was the responsibility of the organisation to find a new tenant or to return the property within 2 weeks of the vacation.

² Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning, YHTS, Guidelines, June 1992

Eligible young people were only those who had been previously homeless, a client of the community organisation involved, an independent income, had an immediate housing need and had a level of living skills. The rent for young people was set at a comparable level to the then public housing rents based on a proportion of income. Young people were also responsible for the connection for utilities and phone connections. There was no limit to the length of the sublease arrangement with the young person.

Fifty units of housing were allocated in 1992 from QDHLP properties to community youth organisations under the YHTS³. By 1994 nearly all of these allocations were still approved. Twenty-two organisations held 49 units of housing however only 15 of these organisations had obtained headleases and 25 subleases were active. In 1998 there were 30 units of housing that were active.⁴

YHTS was aligned with the Crisis and Transitional Housing Pilot Program of the Department of Housing (previously QDHLP) in July 2000, and merged to create the 'Same House Different Landlord' Scheme (SHDL). The SHDL had a broader focus on families with young people being a small component of this larger program area.⁵

REVIEW OF YHTS 1994

An independent review of the YHTS was conducted by S&S consultants in 1994, two years after the initial implementation of the program.

The aim of the Review was to consider how effective, efficient, appropriate and equitable the YHTS was in meeting young people's housing needs. The operations of the YHTS was reported on and recommendations for the future operations of the YHTS were noted⁶

³ Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning. (1994) Review of the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme. S & S Consultants.

⁴ Department of Housing. (1998) Policy retreat.

⁵ Sourced from Department of Housing letter to YHP dated 10th April 2001.

⁶ Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning. (1994) Review of the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme. S & S Consultants.

The Review stated that the YHTS ‘was in a position to make a significant contribution to the range of housing services provided for young people. However, its impact has so far been limited by its relatively small scale as well as some operational difficulties’⁷ (p. 2). The 1994 review suggested numerous recommendations in the following areas, as well as some clarifying statements in terms of guiding the program;

- Program in context – the review identified the importance of the program within a continuum of care;
- Client group – the review noted that the program was targeted at young people who were unable to access public housing;
- Suitable housing – the review noted that housing location needed to match the needs of the young people, with the view that if areas did not have suitable stock that this would be spot purchased through the program. Stock also needed to have adequate security measures such as screens etc. Further that stock should be able to be transferred between agencies to deal with the lack of appropriate 1 and 2 bedroom properties;
- Suitable furnishings – the review noted that the housing needed furnishings and this could be overcome with a one-off grant to the agency with the view that a tenant could purchase the furnishings over the life of the tenancy;
- Suitable tenure – the review noted that there was no issue with the security of tenure arrangements however it was recommended that participating agencies should be continuing to provide the support however that this be expanded to include tenant liaison. Further design issues need to consider shared tenancy arrangements;
- Suitable location – the review noted that due to the lack of appropriate stock in suitable locations it was recommended that both purpose built and spot purchasing needed to occur;

⁷ Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning. (1994) Review of the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme. S & S Consultants, p. 1.

- Transfers – the review noted that there should be no set length of stay and that where there was stable long term tenancies an organisation could be allocated another property;
- Use of resources – the review noted that in order to have best use of the housing stock and improved relationships between the area offices and youth housing services could facilitate this. The review made recommendations that related to regular meetings; and
- scope for expansion of the YHTS.

The 1994 review also argued that there needed to be changes to the guidelines that would enable a strong focus on the client group.

To address the evaluation the Department was going to conduct two pieces of work. One was the development of an options paper that would build on the work of the evaluation. The second phase was to consult with funded service providers with regard to the options paper. The outcomes of the consultation would then inform any further program implementation. ⁸ QYHC can find no evidence that either of these two pieces of work were progressed by the Department of Housing.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROGRAM

SAME HOUSE DIFFERENT LANDLORD

In the merging of the YHTS into the Same House Different Landlord in 2000 there was an initial set of program guidelines released, these were redrafted in 2003. There is very little public information with regard to the SHDL/YHTS guidelines as they apply in 2009. It is our understanding that there is an internal Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services) document.

There are some fundamental changes for young people and services that have occurred in the program objectives⁹ and guidelines¹⁰ from 1992 to today (noting that QYHC does not have access to current program guidelines).

⁸ Sourced from QDHLGP letter to SEQAP dated 3rd August 1995

⁹ Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme, Guidelines, Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning, June 1992

¹⁰ Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme Fax 17 May 2002

(footnote continued)

The program objectives no longer discuss the unique support components of the YHTS. It only focuses on the capital nature of the scheme/program.

In terms of the program guidelines the key changes for young people include:

- the explicit use of the term homeless has been removed;
- they do not necessarily need to be a client of the service prior to being allocated a sub tenancy;
- the potential for their sub tenancy to be terminated if they do not accept an offer of housing from the Department; and
- Departmental discretion in terms of allocation if they have a debt.

For services the fundamental changes in the guidelines include:

- Initially only SAAP funded services or support services were eligible, this was changed to focus on housing providers;
- The move from Incorporated Associations to those registered under the Housing Act 2003;
- Not having to pay rent to the Department;
- Use of rent revenue for housing related costs;
- More involvement by the Department in terms of housing allocations; and
- Greater consideration to range of factors when considering allocations.

Draft Program Specifications 'Same House Different Landlord Program' (Incorporating the Youth Headleasing Transfer Scheme) drafted July 2003, Community Housing, Department of Housing Queensland.

Queensland Government website, Department of Communities, Same House Different Landlord

Attachment 1 provides a complete comparison of the program objectives for the YHTS to the SHDL.

Attachment 2 provides a complete comparison of the guidelines for the YHTS to the SHDL.

UNITS OF HOUSING

In consultation with youth organisations involved in SHDL and Queensland Youth Housing Coalition (QYHC), it is evident that the 1994 review has made no substantiated difference to the increase in housing allocations. The review in 1994 recommended that an increase from 50 allocations of housing be increased to 1000 units. Section 9.2 of the review states “On equity grounds it may be reasonable to set a target number of public dwellings such that the proportion of public housing stock used to house young households is equal to the proportion of young households in the total population” (p. 29).

Organisations have responded to the consultation by stating that there has been no increase in their housing since 1992, with some suggesting that they have had a decrease in housing allocations over time (see Attachment 3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To retain the discrete nature of the scheme within the Same House Different Landlord Program
2. To update the YHTS Program specifications to reflect the specificity of this program to responding to the unique needs of young people.
3. To expand the Youth Headlease Transfer Scheme
4. To develop an communication strategy to ensure that departmental staff and community members.

ATTACHMENT ONE: COMPARISON OF OBJECTIVES

ATTACHMENT TWO: GUIDELINE COMPARISONS

ATTACHMENT THREE: ELIGIBLE ORGANISATIONS AND HOUSING ALLOCATIONS
